

**Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES)**

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# Home Occupations and Home Industries

## • FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS •

**Visit the DDES Web site at  
[www.kingcounty.gov/permits](http://www.kingcounty.gov/permits)  
for more information**

DDES Customer  
Information Bulletin #**43A**

King County DDES has created customer information bulletins to inform the general public about the effect of codes and regulations on their projects. These bulletins are not intended to be complete statements of all laws and rules and should not be used as substitutes for them. If conflicts and questions arise, current codes and regulations are final authority. Because the codes and regulations may be revised or amended at any time, consult King County staff to be sure you understand all requirements before beginning work. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the project meets all requirements of applicable codes and regulations.

For alternate formats, call 206-296-6600.

The King County Code includes provisions that allow residents of a home to operate small scale businesses from their residences. The type and scope of business that is allowed varies depending on the zoning of the property where the residence is located. The King County Code provisions that govern home occupations and home industries are found in K.C.C. Sections 21A.30.080, 21A.30.085, and 21A.30.090. The King County Code is available online at: [www.kingcounty.gov/council/legislation/kc\\_code.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/council/legislation/kc_code.aspx).

To determine your zoning, please visit the DDES web site at:  
[http://your.kingcounty.gov/gis/mapportal/PViewer\\_main.htm](http://your.kingcounty.gov/gis/mapportal/PViewer_main.htm).

Developing plans for a business run out of your home should always include discussing your ideas with staff at DDES to determine if your intended use is allowed as a home occupation or home industry. Residents should also verify whether or not permits are required. Below are some of the questions residents typically need to answer before considering the operation or expansion of a home-based business. As noted above, the answers to these questions can vary according to the zoning on your property.

## HOME OCCUPATION

A home occupation is defined as a "limited-scale service or fabrication activity undertaken for financial gain, which occurs in a dwelling unit or accessory building and is subordinate to the primary use of the site as a residence." Some limited sales are also allowed and should be researched further.

<b>Question</b>	<b>R and UR Zones</b>	<b>A, F and RA Zones</b>
Who is allowed to operate a home occupation from a residence?	Any person who resides in the residence may operate a home occupation from that residence.	Any person who resides in the residence may operate a home occupation from that residence.
If I own a residence, may I operate a home occupation from there even if I do not live there?	No. Only individuals who reside in a dwelling unit may operate a home occupation from that dwelling unit.	No. Only individuals who reside in a dwelling unit may operate a home occupation from that dwelling unit.
May I have a home occupation even if I do not own the dwelling unit?	Yes. Anyone who resides at the dwelling unit may operate a home occupation.	Yes. Anyone who resides at the dwelling unit may operate a home occupation.
How many home occupations are allowed?	One or more home occupations are allowed as an accessory activity to the residence.	One or more home occupations are allowed as an accessory activity to the residence.
How much space/area of my home can I use for the business?	Total area used for the home occupation may not exceed 20% of the floor area of the dwelling. Areas in garages and accessory buildings are NOT considered part of the dwelling unit.	Total area used for the home occupation may not exceed 20% of the floor area of the dwelling. Areas in garages and accessory buildings are NOT considered part of the dwelling unit.
Can the business be in my garage/ out building?	Yes. Garages and accessory buildings may be used for activities associated with the home occupation.	Yes. Garages and accessory buildings may be used for activities associated with the home occupation.
Can I have outdoor activity?	No. All activity must be conducted indoors except for growing or storing plants used by the home occupation.	Yes. Some outdoor activity is allowed depending upon the size of the property. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lots less than one acre are allowed 440 sq ft of outdoor area.</li> <li>▪ Lots one acre or larger are allowed 1% of the lot area up to a maximum of 5,000 sq ft.</li> </ul>
How many employees can I have?	Only one non-resident employee is allowed to work on-site. There is no limit to the number of employees who work off-site.	No more than three non-resident employees are allowed to work on-site. Three other non-resident employees may report to the site but must work primarily off-site. There is no limit to the number of employees who remain off-site.

Question	R and UR Zones	A, F and RA Zones
Are there any specific activities that are permitted/ prohibited?	<p>The following activities are PROHIBITED in the R and UR zones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Auto, truck &amp; heavy equipment repair</li> <li>▪ Auto body work and painting</li> <li>▪ Parking, storage of heavy equipment</li> <li>▪ Storage of building materials for use on other properties.</li> </ul>	<p>The following activities are PERMITTED in A, F, and RA zones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Auto, truck and heavy equipment repair</li> <li>▪ Auto body work and painting</li> <li>▪ Parking, storage and heavy equipment</li> <li>▪ Storage of building materials for use on other properties.</li> </ul>
Can customers come to my business?	Yes but by appointment only; drop-in, walk-in services are not allowed.	Yes. Customers can come anytime during your posted business hours if you choose to operate without appointments.
How much parking do I need?	<p>In addition to the required parking for the residence, on-site parking is required as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One stall for non-resident employee</li> <li>▪ One stall for patrons when services are rendered on-site.</li> </ul>	<p>In addition to the required parking for the residence, on-site parking is required as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One stall for each non-resident employed on site</li> <li>▪ One stall for patrons when services are rendered on-site.</li> </ul>
Are there any restrictions or allowances for outdoor storage areas?	No outdoor storage for the home occupation is allowed in the R and UR zones except for growing or storing plants used by the home occupation.	<p>Outdoor storage and parking in the A, F and RA zones is allowed and must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No less than 25 ft from any property line</li> <li>▪ Screened along portions of adjacent lots or the roadway with Type II landscaping (or the equivalent).</li> </ul>
When is a permit required?	<p>A building permit is required when a new structure is built or anytime a <u>change in the use or character</u> of a space is made. Depending upon the business, the storage and/or use of certain chemicals and materials for your business may also need to be considered for permitting purposes.</p>	<p>A building permit is required when a new structure is built or anytime a <u>change in the use or character</u> of a space is made. Depending upon the business, the storage and/or use of certain chemicals and materials for your business may also need to be considered for permitting purposes.</p>

<b>Question</b>	<b>R and UR Zones</b>	<b>A, F and RA Zones</b>
What codes should be used when designing my plans?	<p>Any new construction or modification to an existing structure up to 500 sf EACH (dwelling and accessory building) may be designed and reviewed under the International Residential Code (IRC).</p> <p>Any new construction or modification to an existing structure that EXCEEDS 500 SF must be designed and reviewed under the International Building Code (IBC).</p>	<p>Any new construction or modification to an existing structure up to 500 sf EACH (dwelling and accessory building) may be designed and reviewed under the International Residential Code (IRC).</p> <p>Any new construction or modification to an existing structure that EXCEEDS 500 SF must be designed and reviewed under the International Building Code (IBC).</p>
What if my property is serviced by a septic system?	Health Department approval will be required as part of the building permit process. In addition, increased usage and activities, along with any chemicals that may be used as part of your business, may also require Health review to determine if those activities might pose a threat and/or damage your existing system.	Health Department approval will be required as part of the building permit process. In addition, increased usage and activities, along with any chemicals that may be used as part of your business may also require Health review to determine if those activities might pose a threat and/or damage your existing system.
Can I put up a sign for my business?	Home occupation and home industry signs are limited to wall signs not exceeding six (6) square feet in the R and UR zones.	<p>Home occupation and home industry signs are limited to wall signs not exceeding six (6) square feet in the RA zone.</p> <p>Properties zoned A and F may have one sign not exceeding 24 square feet to advertise goods or services available on site.</p> <p>Freestanding signs may not be higher than 6 feet and must be at least 10 feet from street right-of-way.</p>
What should happen if my business is successful and grows?	<p>If you stay within the allowed guidelines established, nothing.</p> <p>However, if you expand your operation – either the number of employees or the type of business/process – you should discuss these changes with DDES staff as a permit may be required at a later time.</p>	<p>If you stay within the allowed guidelines established, nothing.</p> <p>However, if you expand your operation – either the number of employees or the type of business/process – you should discuss these changes with DDES staff as a permit may be required at a later time.</p>

## HOME INDUSTRY

If your plans do not conform to what it allowed for a home occupation, you may still be able to conduct some business activity as a home industry. These are limited to properties zoned Agriculture (A), Rural Residential (RA), Urban Reserve (UR) and Urban Residential (R) 1-8 only and require an approved Conditional Use Permit.

In addition to many of the home occupation requirements, the following questions should also be considered by the property owner.

Question	R1-8 and UR Zones	A and RA Zones
What if I my business will have more employees or will use more that 20% of my dwelling unit?	This would be considered a home industry and a conditional use permit is required. A home industry is allowed only in zones R1-8 and UR.	This would be considered a home industry and a conditional use permit is required. A home industry is allowed only in zones A and RA.
How large does my lot need to be?	Home industries are only allowed on lots that are one acre or greater.	Home industries are only allowed on lots that are one acre or greater.
How much space/area of my home can I use for the business?	Total area used for the home industry may not exceed 50% of the floor area of the dwelling unit. Attached garages and accessory structures are not considered part of the dwelling for calculating the allowable area but may be used for the storage of goods associated with the home industry.	Total area used for the home industry may not exceed 50% of the floor area of the dwelling unit. Attached garages and accessory structures are not considered part of the dwelling for calculating the allowable area but may be used for the storage of goods associated with the home industry.
How many employees can I have?	No more that four non-residents who come to the property can be employed in the home industry.	No more that four non-residents who come to the property can be employed in the home industry.
How much parking do I need?	In addition to the required parking for the residence, one stall is required for each non-resident employee and one stall for customer parking.  Additional customer parking may be required at the rate of one stall per 1,000 sf of floor area and 2,000 sf of outdoor work and/or storage areas.	In addition to the required parking for the residence, one stall is required for each non-resident employee and one stall for customer parking.  Additional customer parking may be required at the rate of one stall per 1,000 sf of floor area and 2,000 sf of outdoor work and/or storage areas.
Sales are limited to:	Items produced on site except for items collected, traded and sold by hobbyists, such as coins, stamps and antiques.	Items produced on site except for items collected, traded and sold by hobbyists, such as coins, stamps and antiques.

<b>Question</b>	<b>R1-8 and UR Zones</b>	<b>A and RA Zones</b>
Are there any special landscaping requirements?	Ten feet of Type I landscaping may be required around portions of parking and outdoor storage areas that are visible from adjacent properties or the public right-of-way.	Ten feet of Type I landscaping may be required around portions of parking and outdoor storage areas that are visible from adjacent properties or the public right-of-way.
Are there any limitations that may be imposed by the County?	The type and size of equipment used by the home industry for compatibility with the surrounding properties, limitations on hours of operation, acceptable levels of outdoor lighting and sound level testing are a few areas that may be restricted.	The type and size of equipment used by the home industry for compatibility with the surrounding properties, limitations on hours of operation, acceptable levels of outdoor lighting and sound level testing are a few areas that may be restricted.

Deciding if a home-based business is right for you is a big decision, and determining what type of business activity that's allowed can often be difficult. DDES staff is available and can help you determine if your property can have the type of activity you desire and we want to help you implement your home business correctly the first time!

In addition, there is help available from the Green River Community College (GRCC) and the Small Business Administration (SBA). These organizations offer consulting services and can assist with the development of a business plan for your home business/occupation or home industry. Through a grant from the King County Business and Economic Development Office (BRED), these services are available to citizens in unincorporated areas from Duvall to Enumclaw. Arrangements can be made with GRCC staff to meet near your residence if that makes it more convenient. For more information regarding this program, please visit [www.greenriver.edu/businesscenter](http://www.greenriver.edu/businesscenter).

### **Other bulletins and telephone numbers that may be helpful**

Bulletin 1	Building and Development Permit Telephone Numbers
Bulletin 8	Commercial and Multi-Family Building Permits
Bulletin 9	Obtaining a Residential Building Permit
Bulletin 19	Zoning Code: Permitted Use Tables

Additional forms and bulletins are available via the DDES Web site at [www.kingcounty.gov/permits](http://www.kingcounty.gov/permits).

206-296-6600	DDES Information
206-296-6797	DDES Permit Center Appointment Desk

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King County complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you require an accommodation to attend a meeting (two weeks' notice) or require this information in Braille, audiocassette, or large print, please call 206-296-6600 or TTY 206-296-7217.

